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in all this part of central Africa, where the ox is unknown because of trypanosomiasis.

the produce of hunting and fishing, and these exist until the time of puberty. They signify, according to L. Martrou, that in the family group there should be "no useless mouth," ..."but rather arms and hearts capable of defending and enriching it." (2) Thus

2. L. Martrou, Les "Ékis" des Mfang [The "Ékis" of the Fang] op. cit.

[834] it is forbidden to cohabit with a woman before being circumcized (3)

3. V. Largeau, op. cit. article: Interdit [Interdict].

561 In the same way various rites mark the steps of this ascent: the
578 rite of the Ssò for the ten-year-old children; (4) circumcision,
[852
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4. M. Bertaut in his thesis on the Boulou of the Cameroons, a related nation, speaks of a less degraded form of the Ssò which was the center of a true "society of men" now almost vanished.

which is not accompanied by any initiation (but seems rather to bear public witness to virility and to show the individual as an active male), and above all, the "revelation" of the Biéri. When
561 the young man joins the company of men, he has experienced in
578 various degrees of intensity [153] this biological, social, and
885 spiritual dependence on his ancestors (mvam) and on his elders (nyamòsò). To them he owes his life, his security, his social existence. Even after having crossed the various steps and being able to take full part in the assembly of men, he receives from

no more than a mere conventional taboo, as with certain words considered crude in French. At birth and until weaning a baby is ntyen (nken) or nkeñelé.

After weaning, which usually occurs when the child begins to walk by itself, between eighteen months and two years, the nken becomes a mongô (mone fam • boy; mone minga • girl); an uncircumcised boy is called more specifically nsôsôl.

Circumcision takes place between eight and twelve years of age (1), before the first premonitory signs of puberty, especially the

1. In former times it was sometimes put off until the youth had killed his first enemy. See Trilles (no. 166) and Largeau (no. 48).

appearance of the first pubic hair (afañ, related to the verb fañ • to do well, correctly, on purpose, from the masculine root FA?). The circumcised boy, ntyi'an, "cut one," becomes an adolescent, ndôman, a term also meaning "son" (in relation to a man, see above, p. 63). Correspondingly, a pubescent girl becomes ngon (which can mean at the same time young girl, daughter of a man, or moon: ayene ngon, "to see the moon," that is, to be menstruating), or also élenan. /57/

The adolescent boy is still ébis, uninitiated. The missions have now adopted the term mvôn, "initiated," to denote church members. Formerly, one became mvôn after initiation, mostly in the great national so initiation, the members of which were called monewôsô (probably "child of the death /la mort/ of the sô"; compare this with the joking relationship, awusô • the dying /le mourir/ of the sô).

After initiation, that is, somewhere between the sixteenth and twentieth year, a young man though of military age was not yet a nya môto, a true person. This he became only upon marriage, when he attained what might be considered his legal, civil, even economic, majority.

A girl, ngon, who became ngal or nya ngal, a true woman, by losing her virginity, after marriage was nya minga, a /married/ lady, and ésila or ékua, a matron, when she had brought up her first children. A man with grandchildren was ntole môt, an elder, usually around forty; this was the highest possible social position. Indeed,

861 initiations and now catechism bring all the boys and girls of a village together.

854 Adult surveillance is casual: grown people mainly want /95/ children to know their place and not to be a nuisance. Otherwise, it is mostly the older children who take care of the younger ones.

c. Adolescence

882 854 Boys and girls share their mother's hut until the beginning of adolescence, at which age the boys go to live by themselves, formerly in the "guardhouse," aba, nowadays in a hut on the paternal "allotment." Formerly, girls were sometimes married off before birth and [582] went to the husband's village at about eight years of age; this is very unusual today, but it is still fairly common for them to go at that age to a paternal or maternal aunt or to a married sister, where they act more or less as servants until puberty, being trained meanwhile. It is also quite common for boys to go to live with a relative whose [87] house is nearer a school than is their own village (1).

1. But a motive of proximity to school is not a complete explanation, merely an additional reason for leaving. In fact, a study of urban centers equipped with [574] schools of a good level shows that 30 percent of the children live outside the paternal household with uncles or grandparents. Whatever a father's personal view, he could never refuse his son to relatives expressing a wish to have the boy for some time. (J. B.)

881 304 864 The bongô /children/ become ndôman, a youth, or ngon, a girl, at the onset of puberty. The transition is marked by circumcision among boys, atyi'i atyel, in the past sometimes followed by the first initiation, bekungu. Circumcision is done between the ages of six and twelve, usually around ten. Nowadays it is often done at a dispensary, while it formerly was the occasion of a family and village ceremony. Subjects for circumcision prepared for the ceremony with a relatively short seclusion (of a fortnight) during which they were

881 limited to a vegetarian diet without salt or spices, to "freshen the
304 blood." They received sexual instruction from the ngengañ, diviner-
864 healer, who performed the operation, while the elders, mintôl, examined /the boys/ in knowledge of the mebatan, "salutations" or genealogies: in actual fact circumcision ended the prohibition against coition by showing the danger of involuntary incest in case relation-
304 ships were not well understood. Women were not allowed to be present at the operation, which the ngengañ performed with a special razor, cauterizing the wound with a pimento decoction. A boy was held by his father, who pronounced the formula that lifted the taboo against coition. The foreskin was usually buried under a tree, perhaps a banana, perhaps a tree indicated by clan or lineage tradition, perhaps
[826] chosen, if we accept Trilles, for totemic reasons. Sometimes the foreskin was preserved for magic use. While the scar was healing, the circumcised boy could wear only a special vegetable breechcloth which was renewed daily; during this time no woman was supposed to speak to him or to touch him or his breechcloth; this he took advantage of so as to steal food and various things. /96/ Once the scar had healed, he could no longer appear in public naked. This whole /procedure/ is only partly followed at the present time; furthermore, since the time for the operation has been generally made earlier, circumcised boys who have not yet reached puberty (1) are often

> 1. A Protestant Ntoumou chief in Ambam told me that he had had his children circumcised earlier so as to be able to send them to the district school without running the risk of their breaking the sexual and food taboos of the uncircumcised when away from his supervision.

seen going about nude in villages. According to Trilles and Largeau, in the past some youths remained uncircumcised, minsôsôl, until they had killed their first enemy. At the present time all youths are circumcised, even Christians; the missions have only rarely tried to oppose the practice and always unsuccessfully.

881 After circumcision the nôôman was able to have sexual relations
883 and eat certain foods prohibited before. He went to live with other

881 youths in the aba and prepared for further initiations, while beginning
883 to participate fully in masculine activities, work and games. The bekungu (Fang, bekhun?) initiation that came directly after circumcision was not a general practice. My own impression is that this was not a tribal or clan rite like sô, but that of an association of diviners or seers involving only specially endowed individuals, perhaps related to the ndôngô rite restricted to grown men, which appears to have identical ritual tattoo marks.

881 For the mo'minga reaching puberty there is no stage equivalent to circumcision. In spite of what Trilles says, excision has apparently never been used except as a punishment for certain kinds of adultery or mild incest. It must not be forgotten that a little girl very soon went to live with her affinal family and that she was deflowered as soon as she reached puberty. She very rarely remained élenan, that is, pubescent and unmarried, and then for a very short time. One might almost say that her adolescence was telescoped into the period between childhood and the arrival of puberty marked by the mevungu rite.

582 This adolescent phase is now prolonged by the law fixing the
145 marriageable age at fourteen (puberty usually comes during the twelfth year), by school attendance, and by the change in the bride-price system. Most of my friends of a certain age see in these facts the reasons for a crisis in immorality which they probably to some extent exaggerate.

Nevertheless, first menstruation was apparently acknowledged in a ceremony in which only women took part, but this may have been merely a preliminary to the mevungu initiation, about which hardly anything is known. Otherwise /as regards female adolescence/ coition is forbidden to immature girls, while unmarried girls who have begun menstruating have actually great sexual freedom, even in Christian circles. It must, however, be realized that only too often, especially in schools, there are girls deflowered before puberty, whereas boys seem to wait for circumcision /97/ before their first exploits — there
883 are parents, worried about their sons' "good behavior," who give
884 them aphrodisiacs as encouragement.

d. Transition to Adulthood

892 The ndoman is not yet a real person, nya môtô; undoubtedly he participates in men's work, in hunting and clearing the land, but he

is not yet admitted to the essential functions of full manhood: ritual, warfare, and marriage. Formerly, he was not until after the great tribal initiation, sô. Sô is the name of a large red antelope, Cephalophus castoneus, found in great quantity in the forest and in the galleries of the park-savanna. The meat is taboo, étyi, to the uninitiated (bibis) and, a fortiori, to women. It may seem strange that Trilles does not mention it in Le totemisme chez les Fang, although the sô seems to be one of the most important tribal totems. It should be observed in this connection that the sô rite, widespread among the Cameroons Pahouin, including the Beti, and among those of the Woleu-N'Tem, seems to vanish somewhere between Mitzic and N'Djolé, while some of its features are to be found in the initiation to the biéri, which is basically merely an adjunct. It would therefore appear to have gone to pieces at the same time as the structure of the meyoñ, to be revived in the extreme south by the bwiti, reported by Trilles, which is at present moving northward. Nevertheless, I must point out that what Trilles describes under the name of bawu may well be sô.

Initiation ceremonies were filmed among the Eton of Saa in 1935; the film is kept at the Musée de l'Homme. Bertaut (no. 110) gives a very full description of the outward forms of the initiation, Stoll (no. 84) an interpretation of its symbolism.

Initiation took place about every three years (every seven mimbu?); Bertaut states that a ceremony might be arranged after some serious happening in a village. It lasted three months (one year, according to Stoll, who counts in the preliminary ceremonies for the initiation proper and the period following) and entailed great expense for sacrifices on the part of the parents of initiates and especially the initiation leader, the nkpwé sô (judge of the sô; lit., butcher of the sô), a senior chosen from the most wealthy and respected. From this point of view, one may believe that the rite coincided with the desire for levelling of wealth which appears to have been so constant in Pahouin society. The nkpwé sô did not himself lead the ceremony; he was the instigator and the person responsible, but the celebrant was a diviner, a mfek sô, "sô wise man" or "sô measurer" or "sô pouch," if the tone is changed (vek = to take aim, to compute, to divine, to measure).

The main theme of the rite, of which the following description is quite incomplete, was the death of the sô, awu sô, afterwards eaten

● 82/ by the initiates (its meat was taboo to all others). The ceremony opened with a general village purification and went on to four successive sacrifices till the death of the sô and the communion meal upon its flesh. The candidates, mvôn, passed through a series of tests /98/ and instruction of a warlike and sexual character, at the end of which they became true persons, benya bôtô, as well as true members of the society.

After circumcision youths received preliminary instruction within their families, but this represented preparation for the rite, not the rite itself. Preliminary ceremonies began three months before the initiation took place, with a public confession before the whole village by the nkpwé sô standing back-to-back with another official "who sped his movements, moving lips when he spoke and like him trampling an old calabash" (Stoll); pieces of the calabash were used to receive the blood of the first sacrifice, with which the nkpwé sô and all the minkpwangôs (initiates) of the village were sprinkled, and were then thrown away in the bush to the cry of "Gone, gone /efacé/," (andim, related to the form mendim = water). Initiates then came together outside the village to choose the bevôn who were to ku sô (lit., to fell /tomber/ sô) in this promotion. These beku were then subjected to a first seclusion of twenty days in the forest, during which they built the aba so, a sanctuary containing a platform reached by three ladders, to which access was forbidden to all uninitiated except the bevôn. The mfek sô began to teach them their duties as initiates and proceeded to eliminate those who were "faint-hearted." At the end of this seclusion the bevôn returned to the village in procession and received from their relatives /parents/ presents in groups of nine, the sô ritual number.

The second stage of the initiation then began, étyi'a bilé bi sô, felling the trees of the sô. The nkpwé sô provided materials for a ritual meal, which included a soup in which the mfek sô cooked certain mebiañ intended to reveal any beyem (bearers of évu) among the bevôn. Nothing was supposed to be left over from this meal. The bevôn then lay down in a ditch where they were sprinkled with a special /vegetable/ decoction; then the village women between puberty and menopause strode over them nine times. The minkpwangôs met together for a secret sacrifice and a meal prepared in the same pot as that used for the bevôn meal, called nlak sô (sô horn; according to Stoll, with the esoteric meaning of testicle).

● 881 The nkpwé sô then defecated into the pot, which was buried in a secret spot near the sanctuary. The bevôn then took part in a mock battle at the end of which the nkpwé sô gave goats to their families. The initiated now went into the forest to cut a njôm pole, chosen, according to Allégret, by a woman whose husband had no luck at hunting—this pole was placed across two forks planted in front of the sanctuary near the nkal sô. Meanwhile, the bevôn had been cutting raffia "bamboo" to be used in making the ésam sô, an enclosure around the njôm. They returned in Indian file with their group "major" (ôsu zua) at the head; they set up the "bamboos" in a triangle open toward the back of the njôm, fastening them together with plaited raffia leaves the end of which an initiate buried in the nlak sô. During their marching by, which women and unitiated are not allowed to see, they were beaten with sticks by the initiates.

They then proceeded to a "crabbing" which consisted of immersion in water flavored with pimento. /This was/ the commencement of the third stage, which was continued by withdrawal into the forest, where the bevôn painted themselves white and engaged in a ritual hunt.

Meanwhile, initiates closed the ésam sô with two lianas representing a python (mvôm) and a Dendraspis (ayañ). The bevôn then were subjected to the ant-tree test in which they had to climb an angakomo tree on which weaver-ants lived whose bite is very painful. They then spent a night in the ésam sô, lying on thorns and rubbed with pimento juice, while masked initiates beat them and blew trumpets
[574] to keep them from going to sleep. The next day they went off on a round of visits through villages related or allied to their own, while the mfek sô and initiates carved and shaped the njôm in keeping with clan traditions. The designs had to be explained to the bevôn during the next stage, abete njôm, the erection, the setting up of the njôm.

[304] Upon their return from the round of visits, the bevôn were tattooed by the mfek sô: three rows of incisions along the spine, the two outer ones spreading apart at the top like the sô's "halter, " and a small triangular mark at the nape, perhaps the same as that of the ndôngô. They then put on a sort of skirt of raffia fiber, painted themselves white once more, and did a public dance during which the "major" mounted astride the njôm, the other bevôn after him. Anyone who fell off was rejected by the sô and had to leave the

●88 community. After another sacrifice, the bevôn were again confined inside the ésam sô, where initiates had dug a narrow passage and covered it with wattling and earth, the bottom strewn with thorns, crushed pimento, and warrior ants. The bevôn would receive final instructions, then, after taking mud baths, grunting like hogs, they had to crawl through the passage previously filled with smoke, while the minkpwangôs struck and pricked them with assagais through the cover; a mvôn who rose up or tried to escape was immediately killed by prisoners stationed outside the enclosure. This was the third stage, the true "death of the sô," awu sô.

After leaving the esam, the bevôn were supposed to be aggressive, teasing, to worry the other villagers, steal food, fowls, etc., tear down barriers, and in general behave like wild beasts. This period lasted for several days, preceding the sortie of the sô, akui sô, a parade of the group in war dress, carrying spears engraved with the distinctive clan mark, ndem, which had been consecrated during the initiation. A feast followed. For six months (mbu) afterward, the new initiates were still subject to certain sexual and food prohibitions, from which they were freed if they killed a man during the period. At the end /100/ of this waiting time, they went away, painted white, into seclusion for a night and came back painted red, making the rounds of the village nine times in procession. Then they bathed in a stream where fishing was afterward forbidden until the initiation of the next group, apparently.

A young man thus initiated became a mone wôsô, child of the death of the sô (wu = to die; wôé = to kill), thereafter ready for marriage, which would make him a complete man, nya môtô. His [769] father might instruct him in the family cult, which till then he knew only in its externals; he was taught to identify the ancestral skulls kept in the biéti basket and to enter into communication with them [276] by means of the narcotic herb alan. Sometimes the instruction was given collectively in the melan rite, which, according to Stoll, complemented sô, the latter being androgynous, while the former was gynandrous. Sô was to give creative power, melan fecundity and wealth. Melan has a medical aspect lacking in sô; the participation of women is greater. Some elements seem to have survived until the present day, whereas the last sô ceremonies must have occurred about [114] 1940. Stoll gives a pretty full description in La tonétique des langues bantu... du Cameroun /The Tonal System of the Bantu Languages ... of the Cameroons/ (no. 84).

877 The female rite corresponding to sô is mevungu, about which little is known, for the reasons mentioned earlier. It was not a clan rite, since the women of a village would, in consequence of exogamy, belong to different clans. Like sô, its function was to make of the initiates accomplished women, benya bengono or benya binga, fertile, free of évu, and disciplined, and perhaps, in addition, to set up a community bond between the women of a village in place of the missing clan bond among them.

Initiates of both sexes were exempt from numerous general food taboos. They were bound together by an obligation of mutual aid reinforcing and even transcending that of clan fraternity. The dying out of initiations has definitely left a void which contemporary Pahouin are trying to fill; the new syncretist rites seem to have succeeded better in this than the churches and political parties.

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e. Old Age

878 The nya mɔtô and the nya minga are people in full possession of their faculties, quite capable of fulfilling their social roles. Their prestige is in proportion to their abilities; when they are no longer "true" men or "true" women, society is inclined to lose interest in them and to push them aside. An old man can mitigate his loss of physical power by his wealth or his skill in magic; an old woman owns nothing and easily incurs the risk of an accusation of sorcery. Her decline begins earlier than a man's, when she ceases to bear children or to be physically attractive, while a man reaches his prime when /101/ he has grandsons living with him and accepting his authority. But this authority lasts only so long as a man can "stand up for himself" /se défendre/ in the semi-colloquial sense of the word. Nowadays the ease with which villages and extended families burst their bounds geographically often accelerates this decline, which some minkukum palliate thanks to the polygamy on a large scale that enables them to retain economic power.

Old people without children have a very hard time of it, even in regions converted to Christianity, especially widows, who in their affinal family do not benefit from the clan obligation of mutual aid. In times past old people were abandoned in the forest during migrations; they are still left in bilik, deserted villages, when the main body of the village moves, for instance, to establish itself along a

769 The figure was placed on the new group's first family altar, and so afterwards were the skulls of the founder and of the benya bôtô of succeeding generations. A full biéri basket was the sign of a group's
[554] antiquity, which doubtless implied prestige more than genuine authority, yet nevertheless represented the nearest approach to political authority that existed in the Fang group, particularly if one takes into account the fact that officials of interclan associations were chosen from among the owners of many skulls, whence prestige extended to a large number of mvôk or meyom. The prestige of the living was exerted through the authority of the dead.

[836] Skulls were, indeed, the seat or receptacle of the individual's capacity for action (we must remember that bo = to make, boo = brain), and the use of skulls in the practice of magic was not confined to ancestral skulls only: the skulls of enemies killed in battle or sacrificed in anthropophagous ceremonies before or afterward were preserved, and so were those stolen from neighbors. In the same way the skulls of the kinds of animals desired were used for hunting rites. However, it seems that a distinction was made between family skulls and outsiders' skulls, only the first having a place in the éwolé biéti and
[782] appearing in family rites. The power of the skulls was increased by sprinkling them with sacrificial blood.

769 When a youth reached nya môtô age he had to learn to recognize
869 his ancestors so as to be able to ask for their help when the occasion
● 881 arose. Their skulls were shown to him until he could identify them individually and put them in the correct genealogical order. When he was able to do this, he was given a brew of the narcotic herb alan,
[276] then spent a night in the biéti hut, facing the skulls, which had been removed from the éwolé and placed on the altar on which strongly scented plants were burned. During the night the ancestors appeared and gave him a cognomen and imposed one or more new taboos (at the same time he was relieved of certain prohibitions connected with age). Apparently it was during this initiation that his individual totem was revealed (if it was indeed a totem).

769 This question of the totem is very poorly elucidated, in spite of
614 some 600 pages devoted to the subject by Father Trilles. He dis-
114 tinguishes between clan, segment, individual, family, and society totems, etc. He also distinguishes a tutelary being, mvame, from the "effect of a tutelary being"; akam, an animal totem, from a dedicated animal or an incarnation of a man in an animal, etc. He

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782 legs are flung to right and left alternately; two very lively steps,
535 a pause, two successive jetés to the right and left, and a swaying of the body above the hips make up this dance, which has real beauty and does not lack a certain style.

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881 The circumcision dance is entirely different. The young candidates, painted white from head to foot and dressed in gar-
535 ments of leaves, are led by the initiator before the assembled
304 participants, as soon as the preparatory rites have ended and the operation is to be performed. Grown, circumcised men stand on one side, the ritual experts in the middle, those to be circumcised [511] on the other side. The dance begins. First of all, it consists of an immense circle, which spreads out and turns around the area; then the movement quickens, hands are dropped, and each person leaps and shimmies about on his own, still keeping time, which is marked out by the tom-tom. Moreover, in spite of what appears to be disorder, one soon sees that all movements are regular, perfectly conceived and executed without a hitch, without mistake, without getting out of step. Soon sweat is pouring down the dancers' arms and legs; one after another they go back to their places; only the candidates continue and their dance turns into a spinning in almost one place, on the toes, with hands stretched horizontally. Then, suddenly, at a signal from the tom-tom, the dance stops abruptly: the young dancers rush to their places, sit down, and the operations begin.

Each time the practitioner circumcises a boy, he stands up, holding in his hand proof of the operation, then does a quick dance step consisting of a few merry leaps, to the accompaniment of a special song, which everyone sings together.

When the operations are over, the youths who have been circumcised perform a short dance intended to show their fortitude; it is of just a few steps, done any old way. Then the boys quickly return to their huts, held up by their friends.

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535 The funeral dance is much more beautiful. Far from being dignified and solemn, the fanki is exceedingly lively and complicated, representing, theoretically, the soul of the dead man leaving his body and later reaching the world of spirits.

[515] 3. General Totemic Rites: Details

779 In order to establish some logical order for totemic rites, we may take a man at his coming into the world, follow him through his principal activities, and leave him only at death. In this way we shall include the complete series of general or particular rites which he must observe. However, we shall obviously have to discuss them from the totemic point of view only.

By general rites I mean those concerned with the race or tribe. Among particular rites, on the other hand, I place all those concerned more specifically with the individual.

General rites are as follows:

1. Circumcision, akèle
2. Initiation, evôm
3. Consecration of a chief, elôga
4. War, abal
5. Hunting or fishing expeditions, miyèn
6. Establishment in new territory, edzal mfifi
7. Ordeals, elun, énu mélan
8. Covenants or blood exchange, abvuna

Particular rites to be noted are:

1. Birth and name giving, abiéné, edzü
2. Adoption, anôn mohé
3. Marriage, alux
4. Hunting, fishing, farming, mveñe, ayü kos, bifax
5. Trade, okira
6. Death, awu

The totemic character is sometimes strongly marked in these rites, sometimes it is almost obscured, barely perceptible. At times that character is underlined merely by a gesture, a call, a prayer. But it is never absent. [516]

I. Circumcision

● 881 304 Circumcision cannot be considered a universal rite among Bantu tribes: some practice it, some do not, either because they have never done so or because the custom has been lost in the course of centuries and repeated migrations.

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The Fan and all the tribes of their group have preserved it. In all clans, at a time decided upon by the chief, youths must be circumcised. This rule is also accepted by all the related tribes, Dzèm and Dzandzama, Bulu, Shéké, Batéké, etc.

During my many journeys I hever met a single Fan who had not been circumcised. No young girl would agree to marrying an uncircumcised man, under any conditions. This by the way indicates the value, even in terms of Fan custom, of the temporary marriages contracted with Europeans. The Fan look upon these unions simply as concubinage and designate them by the same word, évež.

[582]
[588]

Although the Fan group has kept circumcision, others have not, so that it cannot be said to now be a general rite among the Bantu. The custom is not the result of Semitic infiltration; some Bantu tribes like the Kavirondo, among whom the Arabs have penetrated, do not practice it, while the Fan, who have never been in contact with Moslems, do so.

a) Is circumcision a religious rite?

We shall take up the subject [circumcision] first from the general, then from the particular, point of view.

The first question to be raised is: Is circumcision a religious rite by nature and origin, consecrating a person to a deity, as by a sort of sacrament? (1)

1. Cf. Lagrange, Études sémitiques [Studies in Semitic Religion], p. 242.

According to certain writers, Renan in particular, circumcision is a purely hygienic custom: "In the beginning," he says, "this custom had neither the widespread character nor the religious significance that was given it later. Without the operation, certain Oriental peoples would be condemned to semi-impotence and dangerous impurities."

Arcin also wrote: "Circumcision is the most important religious ceremony of the black peoples. This practice has probably been made necessary by a special physiological

7: Trilles--56 M-5 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9

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structure. (2) But at present any memory of this cause has been

2. From the medical point of view, this statement is a complete invention.

entirely effaced and these rites are seen only as an offering to fertility gods."

Let me say right here that, as regards the Fan and the Bantu tribes, this physiological rationalization appears of slight value. In fact, though the Fan and other tribes of their group have adopted circumcision, this is far from being the case among all Bantu, certain of whom, like some in Uganda, have even a horror of it. Yet physiological requirements are identical among tribes of the same race and habitat.

We do not have to discuss here the natural advantages of circumcision. Were they even more considerable, it would be wrong to give a rationalistic explanation derived from hygiene, without taking into account the sum of institutions of which it is a part and of which it represents the moderate component, a very temperate practice compared with others. These institutions are the consecration rites of youths at puberty, and it is precisely because circumcision had a hygienic and moderating quality that it spread so widely and prevailed over other, more barbarous, practices. Circumcision has in fact [518] been practiced throughout the whole world among the greatest variety of populations and races, mostly as part of the initiation ceremonies that link a youth more closely with his tribe and his god or gods.

I agree with the majority of writers that this is an operation that is essentially religious in origin, necessary from the hygienic point of view, (1) but never for physiological reasons.

1. From the purely hygienic point of view: "It is impossible to give a raison d'être for circumcision, except as a religious requirement. It is in no way indicated anatomically (in spite of what Niebuhr, Description

7: Trilles--57 M-5 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9

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> de l'Arabie [Description of Arabia] and Winer say); and from the point of view of sexual activity, it has no effect upon a man's potency; hygienically, circumcision is insuffic iently effective." Colonial Despatch, Medical Report, Sept. 3, 1907.

I should also say, with Father Lagrange -- adding to circumcision the tribal mutilations to be discussed, such as the knocking-out or filing of teeth, scarifications, etc. -- "the religious character of these ceremonies cannot any longer be disputed."

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b) Is circumcision a totemic rite?

Granted that circumcision is a religious rite, is it also a totemic one?

According to Frazer, (1) circumcision is part of the initiation rites.

1. Totemism, p. 47

tion rites that link a youth with his tribe and his god; these initiations have a specific character, that of uniting the young man and the animal life of the totem through an exchange of souls. (2)

> 2. In Australia the neophyte is anointed with blood drawn from a warrior's arm or may even drink some of it. A few magical passes are added, which convey to the candidate the corresponding spiritual powers and gifts. He must sleep on the tombs of his ancestors so as to absorb their virtues. Sometimes he is reputedly killed by a certain Thurembul, who returns him to life, and removes one of his teeth. In this, says Frazer, there may have been an idea of

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> rebirth, or of the neophyte's starting a second life; that is why he acquires a new name as soon as he is circumcised, or when the tooth is removed or when he sheds the blood of his family.

I am quite ready to admit with Father Lagrange that circumcision is not restricted to totemic tribes. Among fully totemic tribes, like the Baganda, it is not only not permitted but is even viewed with disgust. [519] I look upon it as basically a religious rite, derived from ancestor worship, and what Frazer says confirms me in this opinion. Nevertheless, I freely admit and even believe that alongside these rites connecting circumcision with ancestor worship there are others, which, coming from the same source, also connect circumcision with the totemic cult; for in many religious phenomena the mvamaydn cult and that of the esayan are closely and inseparably related.

In outlining below the practice of circumcision among the Fan, we shall point to the rites that derive from the mvame. Our reply to the initial question will then be:

Circumcision among the Fan is certainly a religious rite; it is not a purely totemic phenomenon, but the totem enters into it.

Bros agrees with these conclusions, at least in part. In his opinion, circumcision is a test of puberty, a first-fruits offering to the gods, a purification made to release an evil spirit which vanishes with the blood: above all, it is a pact by which a part of one's blood is given to the tribal god (1) and

> 1. In my opinion, the term "tribal god" ought not to be used; the Bantu tribes recognise only a single Creator, under different names, and not a god for each tribe.

one thereby becomes incorporated in him and in the tribe. Finally, the taboo surrounding this organ of the body, to which the origin of circumcision may be traced -- either because of the social function of the organ or of the danger of its premature use, or even because of its independence of volition -- allows circumcision to be considered as a desecration that has to precede the stage of virility, in order that use may be made of it. (2)

2. Bros, Religion des peuples non-civilisees [Religion of Non-civilized Peoples], "Circoncision" [Circumcision].

Some of these statements hold good for the Fan; some are less applicable. Let me use as an example one of the things that illustrates very well the close connection between circumcision as a religious rite and childbirth rituals, the fact that pieces of cloth used to staunch blood are in both cases carefully kept to be used for the same purpose. [520]

Ordinary warriors place them with their personal totem in the mfek or pineapple-fiber bag which never leaves them. These pieces of cloth or fragments of them, are always part of totemic sacrifices. The sons of chiefs, on the contrary, are not allowed to keep them; they bury them deep at the base of the sacred fig tree planted when they were born over the remains of the umbilical cord. This custom certainly goes back to remote antiquity. Among the Egyptians, the fig tree was considered sacred and dedicated to the Egyptian Venus, Hathor. From this perhaps comes the word éthu, designating a garment made from the bast of the fig tree. The same word, éthu, has remained in the Fan language with the same meaning, "garment," and the inland Fan always make vegetable-fiber cloth from the fig tree, which they still dye red; this was formerly the color dedicated to Hathor, and it has remained the color of betrothal garments. For the same reason, before marriage, young men and women stain themselves red from head to foot. It is a color "set apart."

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c) The Circumcision Itself

The Fan use the term akéla for circumcision, at least as regards boys. The root of the word is clearly in the verb ekèl, of which the radical element expresses the idea of "cutting" and "removing." For girls the word atsingéla is used, which denotes at once ligature, extension, and excision.

We shall examine:

1) The phenomenon itself
2) The age of the candidate
3) The operation
4) The participants -- patient and operator
5) The instrument

1) The phenomenon itself

Circumcision is universal throughout the Fan nation and no male is exempt. Besides, he would be disgraced, and he would not be able to enter into marriage without having first had this operation. Even children brought up in missions do not escape; as soon as they go back to their villages, [521] they submit with good grace if they have remained uncircumcised.

If old people are questioned about the "why" of the ceremony, it is hard to get an answer from them, and they nearly always fall back on custom, "We've always done it," or propriety, "It's better that way." Both answers, especially the second, are of real value. Yet one day I got a much more interesting reply from a chief in the interior, who told me, "It marks the beginning." And when I insisted on further explanation, he replied, "It is the mark that sanctifies manhood; afterwards one is no longer an animal, one is 'sacred.'" ("E ne ndèm ɔ̀ŭ, ndèm a bo fam: ni vale, tsit é séra, mur a ne éki," lit., "It is the mark of the first beginning, the mark which sanctifies virility; after the operation, the animal has disappeared, and there is a man, and he is sacred.") As the chief did not want to say anything more, he fell back upon the rules of secrecy. It was difficult, if not impossible, in the tribe with which I then was, to attribute a Christian or Moslem origin to this reply; the chief has never heard of either of them. It would be much simpler to

881 look at it as a vestige of primitive tradition.
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779 To the Fan mind, circumcision is altogether a religious, never a secular, act; everything that I shall have to say about it will illustrate this further.

2) The age of circumcision

The age at which Fan boys are circumcised usually varies from seven to ten. I have never seen a baby circumcised. However, there is nothing prescribed by law or custom on this point. Yet in the interior, the age of ten is far exceeded, and it is not unusual for the operation to take place between sixteen and twenty. Old men are unanimous in saying that this was the ancient custom, and that the time for the operation was made earlier in recent times because of the many casualties that occurred. It is impossible to determine precisely what they mean by "recent times." However, according to all the evidence I could gather, one should hardly go back [522] more than 200 to 300 years, that is, to the time of the great Fan migrations. We can see how unlikely it would have been during that period of confusion to perform the operation successfully at so late an age.

Formerly, circumcision must have closely preceded entering the warrior stage. Certain Fan songs seem to indicate this, and many African tribes have preserved the custom.

All the children of a village are circumcised at the same time at the tribal chief's command; the operation only takes place at certain times, when there appear to be enough children, yearly in some villages, at longer intervals in small ones.

[291] Until circumcision, children may go naked; afterwards a bit of cloth bark of the fig tree will always be worn.

881 The seven-to-ten-year limit is appreciably exceeded in
304 the following case: a father may, out of pride, make a solemn
779 vow to his akaméyôn that his son will not be circumcised until
782 he [the son] has killed an enemy. Under those conditions the youth may go naked for a long time; nor can he have any relations with a woman or even live with the one his father may have bought for him as a future wife. Consequently, he will

881 304 779 782 do all he can to end this state. As soon as he has killed an enemy, he hurries with the victim's hand to his father. Circumcision then solemnly takes place before all the warriors, and his marriage is celebrated as soon as the wound has healed.

881 304 779 3) Time of the ceremony

The chief first decides upon the date, which is almost invariably in the eight days before a full moon.

As soon as the chief has announced that circumcision will shortly take place, he indicates all the children who are to be included; they, under his direction, go off into the forest not far from the village. After a large space has been cleared, they [342] build open little huts or mere shelters, where they live all together.

Their food is left at the beginning of the path leading to the huts, for no one is supposed to approach; access [523] is above all strictly forbidden to women. The food is plentiful, [264] and nothing must be thrown away or hidden; everything must be eaten, and the chief supervises this rigorously. (1)

1. One of our missionaries observed the same custom among the more advanced populations of the interior. He even mentions this fact: the rule is so strict that one of the candidates was forced three times in succession to swallow the food that his stomach persistently rejected.

4) Preparations

[857] All around the place where the boys are confined, a fence of reeds (1) is erected, which no one dares jump over. This seclusion

1. The place of circumcision shows well enough that the rite is like a consecration, by blood sacrifice, of the sexual life to which the young man is thereafter admitted. Lagrange, op. cit., p. 244.

7: Trilles--63 M-5 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9

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does not usually last longer than eight days, a lunar quarter. Every evening songs and dances are performed in honor of the moon, which is looked upon as a source of fertility. (2) In Fan,

> 2. The same belief exists in almost all African tribes; just as in Egypt, the moon presides over rain, which is the earth's source of fertility and thus of human fertility.

the same word, ngon, denotes "girl" and "moon," an ambiguity to be found nearly everywhere among African tribes, in varying degrees. These songs and dances are very special and repetition [533] of them is strictly prohibited outside the sacred enclosure. (3)

> 3. All I could discover on the subject from my young Christian converts who had already gone through the ceremony was that these songs were "bad" and had as their purpose procreation. There is no doubt that the Fan say things "crudely" in their songs. That is all I can say.

According to Lang, (4) this is the time when a youth is

> 4. The Making of Religion, Art.: "Circumcision."

taught about the existence of a beneficent god, a defender of morals, who condemns egoism and adultery. This is so among the Fan. In fact, it is during their retreat the chief teaches the children the mébara, or wisdom of the ancestors, and narrates the great deeds of the race. This is as much as we have been able to learn, for the rule of secrecy is scrupulously observed. During the final days the chief makes a point of mixing into the

§81 During the final days the chief makes a point of mixing into the
304 boys' food certain aphrodisiac stimulants, cardamon seeds [524]
719 (Amomum citriodorum), a wonderful red fruit (Lavigeria), and
§32 onzakôn (Antrocaryon klaineanum) which, apart from these oc-
§24 casions, only women may eat. They are even forbidden to say the name of that tree, because the word nkôn denotes the male genital organ; they must say onzabili, the onza tree. In addition the fruit of the onzakôn has a slight resemblance to a phallus.

Throughout their seclusion the children sleep stretched out
§81 on the ashes of the hearths. They must tell the chief what they
304 have dreamt about; the family totem ought, in fact, to re-
719 veal itself to them at this time. Since the chief speaks to the
§28 children frequently and since they know that they are supposed to have the totem in mind, the suggestion, intimate and strange at the same time, leads easily to the desired result. If, however, a different object from the family totem, animal or other, appears more vividly and repeatedly in their imaginations, it would be a sign that the totemic guardian spirit wants to adopt another medium and, consequently, the child's totem, if he has a personal one, has to be changed.

5) The ceremony

§81 On the day of the operation, the practitioner, who has
304 been forewarned, goes to the enclosure, accompanied by the
719 fathers. Each child is questioned in turn; then there is a big dance performed in honor of the ancestors and guardian spirits of the clan. Each head of the family has brought along his *mvoussoôn and now explains it to the child. A new dance is* done after this initiation. Each father then stretches his son out on the ground, sits down beside him, and slips his legs beneath the child's body in such a way as to raise the middle of the body. The practitioner has a knife in hand kept specially for this purpose and carefully wrapped in a little sheath. The
[§13] knife used to be made of stone, but that kind has become very rare. Knives are now usually made of copper and are curiously worked, one end being beak shaped, the other pointed; they are not hafted. These knives are called ekniokôn.

The practitioner operates quickly, assisted by the chief of the tribe. Before operating on each child, he hands the knife [525] to the chief, without a word, and the latter accepts it, also in silence, without saying the usual "thank you" or "very good," abora or mvɛ̀.

With girls none of these ceremonies are observed. An experienced matron performs the operation, usually when the child is very young. It is nevertheless a religious act, accompanied by songs and dances, but since only women are present, it was impossible for me to learn the slightest detail.

The tribal chief immediately returns the knife to the practitioner, saying, "Take it and do what has to be done." (Nɔ̂ɔ̂e n'ébo dzam ma yia n'ébo, lit., "Take it so as to do the deed which 'I' ought to do.") This proves that the practitioner is but the chief's delegate. Usually it is the latter who holds the penis firmly. First of all, the father pulls out the foreskin as far as possible and ties it with a bit of string. The penis, thus prepared, is then stretched out on a special board, and the practitioner cuts quickly. This is the most painful part of the operation. Ashes are then rubbed on the open wound. The head of the family carefully collects the blood, which will constitute a powerful fetish after it has been offered in sacrifice to the mvamayɔ̂n and to the ancestors.

It is a point of honor for the children not to cry out, no matter what the pain. Besides, the pain must be very much lessened by the fact that the chief squeezes the flesh firmly and the operator works quickly. As soon as it is over, the child is taken to be bathed and is then laid on a bed of ashes. His scanty clothing is removed, if that has not already been done during the preceding days, and he is now dressed in a loose garment or a belt from which hangs a thick pad of raffia fiber or thin strips of finely cut banana tree bark, so as to protect him from being hurt. After the operation every father offers the practitioner a present, often a sheep or at least several hens. The latter then, according to the customary rites, offers one of the sheep to the spirits and has part of it burnt. The ashes of the sacrifice, mixed with the collected blood, will constitute the child's fetish. Anything left over is carefully buried in a place

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apart, and everyone then avoids letting them be seen. [526] The rest of the sheep is eaten by the children the next day.

They remain in seclusion for a few more days. At the end there is another ceremony, also accompanied by dances and songs. They show the reassembled heads of families that the operation has been successful. They then remove the circumcision belt, put back the ordinary loincloth, and return to the village, where they are feted.

d) The consequences of circumcision

"Everything that has to do with procreation," writes Father Lagrange (1) of these ceremonies (and I quite agree with his

1. Études sur les religions sémitiques [Studies in Semitic Religion], pp. 244 ff.

conclusions), "is eminently taboo, surrounded with restrictions and precautions imbued with a religious character and sanctioned by strict laws. Through circumcision a person is really affianced by blood. This may perhaps have been one condition which entitled the begotten child to become in turn a member of the both national and religious association, the community." (We have just seen that this is definitely so among the Fan, for an uncircumcised boy would neither be admitted to the first initiation tests for warriors nor be able to marry: both tribe and future wife would be opposed to it.) "Every time blood is shed, one might wonder whether it is in order to make use of its intrinsic power, in the sense of magic, or for expiation, or to link one person to another by exchange of blood and vitality. Here it would seem to be a question of union, since the rite is initiatory: life is to be transmitted by an organ linked to god through blood letting; at the same time, it represents the ending of a very sensible taboo, which saves the youth from premature indulgence, comparable to that which protects growing fruits and cereals and which ends with the first-fruits sacrifice."

Mgr. Le Roy (1) differs somewhat from Father Lagrange

1. La religion des primitifs [The Religion of Primitive Peoples], pp. 235 ff.

881 on the subject of circumcision: "Circumcision, in our view, is
384 connected with the institution of the taboo; it was originally the
779 lifting of a prohibition. Before having gone through this ceremony, a young man cannot marry; he is not acceptable [527] to any woman and he has no right to nuptial relations. And if these should nevertheless, occur -- and they do! -- the child of this forbidden intercourse is accounted 'bad' and must disappear."

848 Among the Fan such a child, without being considered exactly "bad," is thought of as not belonging to the tribe. Since the father has not the right to be a father, he cannot give the child a name; and if the child escapes the first vicissitudes of babyhood, it will soon die of neglect and hunger, scorned by all. This is especially the case with mulattoes, whose birth in itself places them outside the tribe. They are found on the coast and near European settlements, where, along with the decline in moral standards, the family has to a great extent disappeared, with the laws that used to guarantee its integrity and corresponding moral code. In the interior, in spite of the passage of numerous traders and explorers whose morals are no better than those of the coast, mulattoes are very rare, to say the least. We have just given the reason for this.

880 "Here," continues Mgr. Le Roy, "we have a typical and interesting illustration of the principle set forth above. The transmission of human life takes place in a mysterious realm where the activity of the Lord of Creation is manifest, or at least taken for granted, and to which man cannot be admitted except by a sort of authorization from God and with the help of an appropriate ceremony. At the indicated time the prohibition may be removed, but as always in such cases the 'use permit' must be bought back by a blood sacrifice, hence circumcision, the moral purpose of which is obvious, because the taboo or prohibition that it ends is a rigorous obstacle to sexual relations between children who have not reached puberty.

"This institution can be found everywhere; to be so widespread it must have a widely applicable raison d'être; this is

000 none other than the sacred prohibition in the interest of the family's moral welfare, which is lifted, when necessary, in the same interests."

304 881 779 Circumcision for Mgr. Le Roy is, therefore, in short, only "the lifting of a prohibition in the interest of family welfare." [528]

Although this explanation is neat and seems to satisfy all requirements, it still does not appear to me altogether correct. It takes the effect for the cause. Undoubtedly, a lifting of a prohibition in the interest of family welfare does follow circumcision, but the lifting, and the prohibition itself, seems to me very much an effect, a consequence, not the cause, and I believe that the objective is above all the sacrifice, admittedly a sacrifice for the welfare of the race. As Father Lagrange points out, "this system" (initiations, tests, and especially circumcision) "implies a close religious relationship within a social group at a low stage of development. It would seem to be a matter of religious unity. In the great Assyro-Babylonian civilization, there is no evidence of circumcision, but then, as now, among widely scattered peoples, some had adopted it, some had not." Is it then enough to say, as for the Bantu tribes, that those who no longer have it have either abandoned it or never possessed it? If in fact all Bantu tribes come from a single stock, as we believe, all have been familiar with circumcision, and we are dealing with a much more ancient rite.

177 304 881 We have already mentioned the Egyptian infiltration into Fan manners and customs and the influence of their beliefs. Therefore circumcision might go back to them. Herodotus had already pointed out that circumcision came from Egypt and had, by way of Egypt, spread throughout the Mediterranean world (Her. II, 104). "It may well be," writes Father Lagrange on this subject, "that circumcision among Egyptians was not exactly borrowed from an ethical system, but was a tradition from their origins, going back to the time when they started coming down the Nile Valley, according to contemporary opinion.

177 We also find the tradition among the Arabs as far back in their
304 history as we can go."
●881 Therefore -- and Johnston is of the same opinion -- circumcision is not a rite devised to meet specific needs but one that dates back to the origins of the human race. From the beginning, man has offered first fruits to God. From this to offering the first fruits of human beings and of life, the step was inevitable, and it was quickly made. [529]

304 In the Fan group at least, circumcision is thus based upon
881 the idea of sacrifice itself and not, as Mgr. Le Roy says, upon
779 the simple lifting of a prohibition that is very useful and very moral. It is based not only on the idea of sacrifice itself but on that of an offering by desecration, which is the very foundation of sacrifice. "Especially at the first use of things it is important to give the gods their share," to renew the covenant with the Master of life. From the beginning, man presented the "first fruits" of things to the deity, above all in order to truly acknowledge his realm. Is not man's life that which is most precious? And the basis of life is certainly the procreative act. Furthermore, the basic concept of clan and tribe is based on the family, so that again from that point of view, procreation is the most important act of life. It is the first fruits of the generative process that will be offered to the Lord of the clan and to the ancestors, deified or not, but supposedly standing by. Therefore this will be a religious act, carried out by the practitioner with the help of the tribal chief and the head of the family, that is, the three clan authorities. So that the ceremony may be more solemn, the remains of the ancestors and of the eponymous animal will be included; finally, as in every sacrifice, blood will be shed. These terms make the sacrifice totemic.

But so that the first fruits may be pure and the shed blood acceptable and effective, they must be truly first fruits. It is therefore very important that they be preserved as such; the means is simple and effective and consists of the éki, that is, the prohibition of certain foods and especially of sexual relations before the set time. The law is not even concerned with the

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"fruit" that might result from transgressing the prohibition. The fault, nsem, must be expiated ritually as a fault, but the law would not consider the child as "bad" or guilty; the law does not take it into account at all, but ignores it: the child is "outside the law," res nullius, and is not killed but left to die. It is therefore important that they be really first fruits. Then, too, when the appointed time comes, when a Fan begins to feel himself ready to procreate in his turn, when he can take his place along with the young warriors, the sacrifice will be performed with all formality; once this has been accomplished, [530] but only then, will the prohibition be lifted. The sacrifice ought to be not only carried out but accepted too, because if, for one reason or another -- and this happens -- after circumcision has been performed according to the rules, the practitioner still considers that the spirits of the real or totemic ancestors are not satisfied, an additional sacrifice will be necessary in order to make the first acceptable.

Thus it is clear in what ways our notion of circumcision differs considerably from that of Mgr. Le Roy. In his opinion, it consists of the lifting of a prohibition in the interest of the family's moral welfare a "use permit," that must be bought back by a sacrifice; in our opinion, in agreement with Father Lagrange's, the lifting of the prohibition is not the cause but a natural consequence. The prohibition's objective is circumcision, the 'use permit" is the inevitable result, not the cause, of the sacrifice, and circumcision (1) is the very sacrifice of the

1. Lagrange, Études sur les religions sémitiques [Studies in Semitic Religion], "Le Sacrifice" [Sacrifice"], pp. 255 ff.

procreative first fruits, the most important act from the point of view of clan unity and the perpetuation of the family.

II. Initiation

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The second totemic rite that we come upon in the life of a Fan youth is his initiation.